

# Integrating Urban Health, Planning, and Public Participation: Insights for Municipal Planners

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## Introduction

- Urban health, planning, and public participation are integral to shaping the well-being of city residents.
- As cities grow, the way they are designed and how communities are involved in decision-making can significantly impact public health outcomes.
- Urban environments can contribute to issues like food insecurity, air pollution, non-communicable diseases, and housing challenges.
- For municipalities like Lethbridge, adopting inclusive, equitable, and sustainable urban planning practices is essential to improving health and fostering resilient communities.

Research focus:

- How can the intersection of health, urban planning, and public participation inform policy and planning strategies for community health in municipalities?

## Methods

Journal Selection:

- Identified 9 open-access Canadian and Commonwealth planning journals with similar urban contexts to prioritize practical insights and reflections on real-world applications.

Search Strategy:

- Keywords: Health, planning, public participation.
- Articles published after 2010 and addressing 'planning' AND either 'health' or 'public participation'.

Screening and Grouping:

- Articles grouped into two categories:
- Urban health and planning (12 articles).
- Planning and public participation (8 articles).
- Total: 20 articles included in the review.

**Table 1: Case Study Summary**

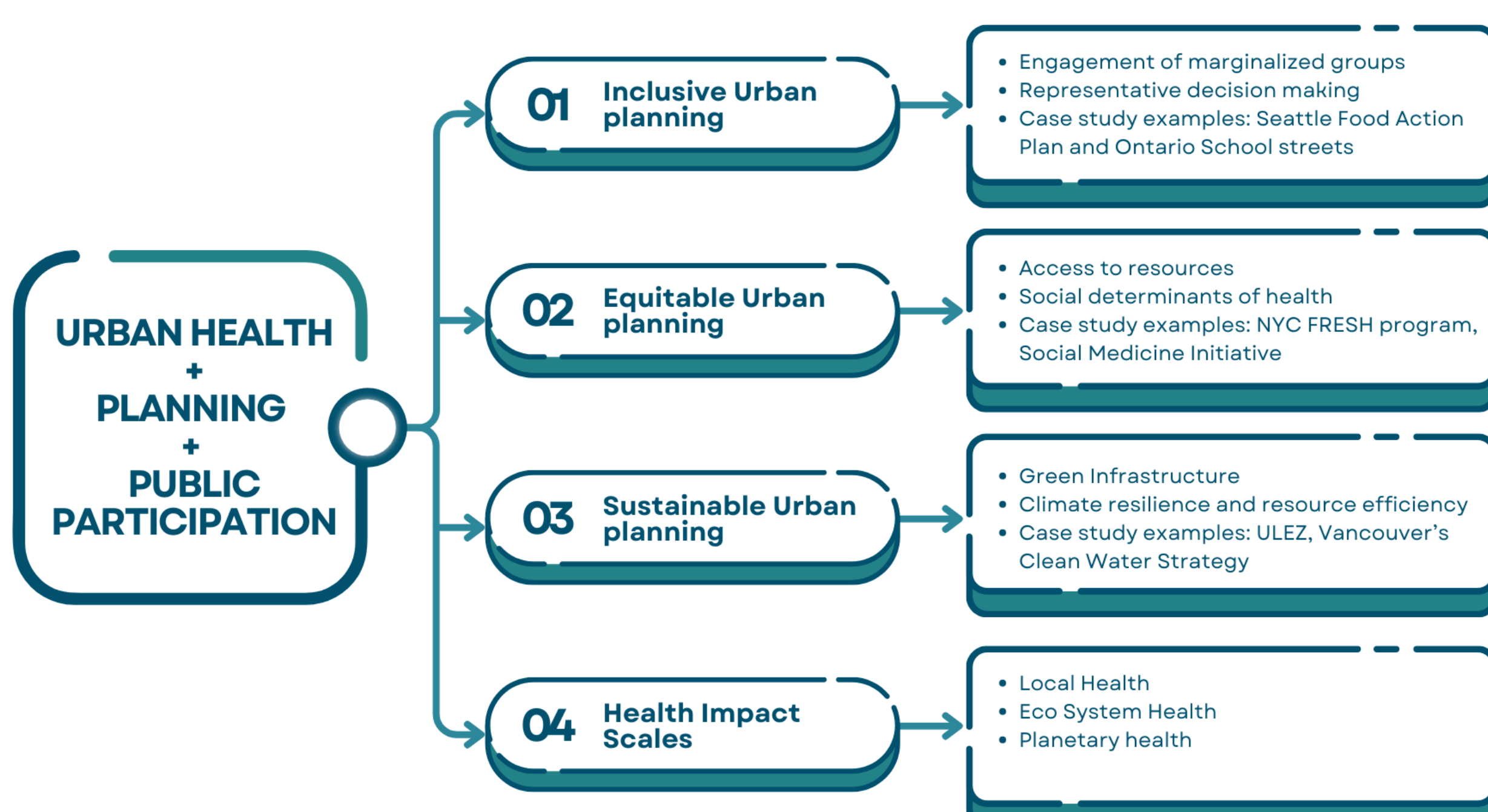
Case Study	City/Region	Key Intervention	Key Impact
NYC FRESH Program	New York City	Grocery store development in food deserts	Improved access to fresh foods in underserved areas
Seattle Food Action Plan	Seattle	Citywide strategy for sustainable food systems	Enhanced food security and access
Kingston Transit Highschool Bus Pass Project	Kingston	Free bus passes for high school students	Increased student mobility and access
Ontario School Streets Pilot	Ontario	Temporarily closing streets around schools to reduce traffic	Safer streets for students, improved air quality
Complete Streets Calgary	Calgary	Street redesigns to improve pedestrian, cyclist, and transit accessibility	Increased active transportation
Healthy Streets London	London, UK	Improving street environments for health and well-being	Improved air quality and physical activity
Parks After Dark Program (Los Angeles)	Los Angeles	Extended park hours and activities in high-risk neighborhoods	Reduced crime and increased community engagement
Vancouver Park Board Smoking Regulation By-Law	Vancouver	Banning smoking in parks	Reduced secondhand smoke exposure
Social Medicine Housing Initiative	Toronto	Housing-first approach combined with healthcare services	Improved health outcomes for marginalized groups
Greenest City Action Plan - Clean Water Strategy	Vancouver	Strategies to improve water quality and sustainability	Better access to clean water and sustainable practices
ULEZ London (Ultra-Low Emission Zone)	London, UK	Implementing low-emission vehicle zones in central London	Improved air quality, reduced health risks from pollution

## Key Findings/Discussion

- This review applied the THRIVES framework to analyze articles exploring the intersections of urban health, planning, and public participation. The framework, which highlights inclusivity, equity, and sustainability, provided a lens through which the findings were grouped and analyzed.<sup>2</sup>
- Inclusivity emerged as a key theme in urban planning, with articles emphasizing the importance of engaging residents, especially marginalized groups, in the planning process. This ensures that urban spaces reflect the needs of all communities and fosters equitable access to resources.
- Equity was a central focus in many articles, with a clear need for urban planning to address systemic barriers to health. Solutions like affordable housing, access to green space, and access to healthy food are essential to reducing disparities and improving health outcomes for marginalized populations.<sup>3</sup>
- Sustainability was highlighted across several studies, showing that planning for long-term health and environmental resilience is critical. Green infrastructure and active transportation systems not only benefit public health but also support climate resilience and environmental sustainability.<sup>4</sup>
- The intersection of inclusivity, equity, and sustainability examined through the scales of local health, ecosystem health, and planetary health demonstrated how urban planning decisions can create integrated, sustainable solutions that enhance both individual, community and planetary health.<sup>2</sup>

## Chart

Figure 1. Mind map illustrating the intersection of urban health, planning, and public participation through the THRIVES framework and key case studies.<sup>2</sup>



## Recommendations

- Use local health and environmental data to inform planning decisions and identify potential health risks and opportunities.<sup>5</sup>
- Prioritize walkable cities and improve transit systems to promote physical health and reduce environmental impact.<sup>4</sup>
- Engage communities and community organizations through accessible, ongoing dialogues from the planning onset to ensure planning efforts reflects the needs of all residents.<sup>5</sup>
- Prioritize collaboration among different governmental sectors including public health, social services, environmental services, and economic departments<sup>6</sup>
- Planning efforts should focus on addressing social determinants of health such as affordable housing, income inequality and food security.<sup>6</sup>

## References

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